

### **Veterans**

---

As a senior member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, improving the quality of life for our nation's veterans has been one of my top priorities. I have been a strong advocate for improving the benefits and health care that veterans deserve for protecting our country. I serve on the Subcommittees on Health and on the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. The Subcommittee on Health oversees the health care system for the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), which serves nearly 250,000 veterans in Kansas.

I have worked in Congress to provide the necessary resources to the VA to meet our promise to those who have served our country, especially at a time when thousands of troops are returning from battle. Improving access to health care for veterans who live in rural areas has been a focus of mine. Approximately 44% of today's military recruits are from rural areas, as are many Guard and Reserve members that our nation increasingly calls to service.

In 2007, as gas prices soared, I successfully offered an amendment that increased the veterans' mileage reimbursement rate for the first time in nearly 30 years. This effort helped more veterans afford the trip to the VA doctor by doubling the rate from 11 cents per mile to 28.5 cents, and it has since been increased to over 40 cents.

I have also supported bringing VA care closer home by helping to open five VA outpatient clinics in Kansas since first coming to Congress, including Hays, Dodge City, Salina, Junction City, and Hutchinson.

For veterans living in rural areas far from VA medical facilities, Congress recently approved a three-year pilot program that I authored that will give Kansas veterans the choice to receive care locally. Long distances to VA facilities make access difficult and often mean rural veterans forgo their trip to get treatment. This innovative, common sense approach will allow rural veterans to receive care at a local hospital or physician's office.

I am currently working to ensure implementation of two important benefits that were approved in 2008. First is the rural veteran pilot program that allows rural Kansas veterans to obtain health care in their home communities. Additionally, I am focused on speedy implementation of modern GI Bill to help Iraq and Afghanistan veterans afford an education. The Post 9/11 GI Bill, which I sponsored, will fully fund the cost of a four-year education, including tuition, books, and living expenses.

[Click here](#) to view my video, 'Veterans Should Not Pay the Bill'